

ICT for Development

Second Committee

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Statement by

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Madam Chairperson,

As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor in this Committee, allow me to congratulate you on your election to chair this Committee and in the exemplary manner you are conducting our proceedings.

Belgium on behalf of the EU Member States has already addressed this Committee and I will therefore make some additional remarks.

Malta believes that that the five years since the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) have reflected the importance of the multi-stakeholder approach in addressing the public policy issues and challenges related to the Internet while also advancing opportunities for access and growth, as the Internet continues to evolve and increase its crucial role in the global information economy.

In this context, Malta expresses its appreciation to the UN Secretary General for his reports on this important agenda item and especially that relating to the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum. Malta agrees with the recommendation made by the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the Forum for a further five years until 2015 overall assessment of the implementation of the WSIS mandated by Para 111 of the Tunis Agenda is undertaken. Malta believes that the formal consultations with IGF members in Sharm EL Sheikh in 2009 demonstrated an overwhelming support for the continuation of the IGF. In turn, the Fifth Annual Meeting of the IGF held in Vilnius last month (September 2010), highlighted the fact that capacity-building, and access and affordability have become paramount concerns for the IGF, culminating in a dedicated main session in the Vilnius Programme on Internet Governance for Development (IG4D).

At the national level, Malta is making great strides to create the right environment in advancing ICT development in all spheres of the Maltese society. Over the last decade Malta has been taking steps to transform itself into a Regional Centre for ICT Excellence contributing significantly to the country's economic development. Among notable developments, is the current construction of SmartCity Malta which will offer state-of-the-art information technology and media city on the models of Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City. Also, the eSkills Alliance Malta was launched which will act as a collective voice and authoritative entity in ensuring that Malta offered the best possible supply of ICT professionals required by international and national ICT industry. Discussions are also taking place for the establishment of an eSkills Competence Framework. A recent survey by the Malta Communications Authority has revealed that about 97% of Maltese youngsters between 8 and 15 years have access to the internet at home. These important developments in Malta have received the acknowledgement of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Information Technology Report 2009-2010 which has confirmed Malta's place as the 26th "most networked economy in the world".

At the international level, Malta is taking steps to share its ICT knowledge also through Malta's Overseas Development Policy by providing support to local NGOs dedicated to development and to humanitarian assistance. For example, this year Malta has sponsored a project 'Kull Briedem Hija' (Every Person is my Brother) to aid in the purchase of equipment for a number of workshops in Sigomere, Kenya, covering ICT Literacy Skills and tuition fees.

Through the COMNET Foundation for ICT Development, the Government of Malta jointly with the Commonwealth Secretariat helps Commonwealth and other developing countries realize the transformational potential of ICT for development, through various forms of collaboration including capacity building and technology transfer, assisting them in the development of national ICT strategies, the setting up of Telecommunications Regulatory frameworks, and contributing to the development of eGovernment services, through training and consultancy. COMNET was selected as the lead partner agency tasked with building a contact network, developing a repository of Commonwealth ICT assets, nurturing links with donor agencies and coordinating projects under the aegis of the programme.

COMNET has also been entrusted the lead of the Commonwealth Internet Governance Forum (CIGF). The purpose of this initiative is to inform and engage stakeholders on public policy issues relating to Internet Governance. In its first year of operation, the CIGF has run travel bursaries, organized several regional information sessions on IG getting Commonwealth Countries connected with international agencies operating in the field, organized open forum discussions both to formulate its own agenda and priorities as well as to inform legislators and policy makers on issues of Cybercrime and online child protection.

Malta has supported the Internet Governance Capacity Building Programme (IG CBP) during the WSIS process through Diplo Foundation which has been in charge of the coordination and direction of the IG CBP since its inception in 2002 with the aim of addressing the lack of capacity of small developing States to follow the WSIS negotiations on Internet Governance. Diplo Foundation, a joint initiative between Malta and Switzerland, and with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, continues to play a critical role in a number of global networks and offers capacity building programmes for participants from developing countries in a number of topics including Internet Governance. In this regard, over the last five years nine month long programmes have been held with 801 participants from 140 countries, including 31 small island states and 40 least developed countries involving diplomats, other government officials, representatives of business sector, civil society and media. In this way, IG CBP facilitates capacity development at multiple levels, from individual to organization, network and system level. IG CBP has worked in the partnership with the IGF Secretariat, Canada, ITU, Egypt, India, the Council of Europe, AT&T, the Commonwealth Secretariat and COMNET-IT.

The Diplo Foundation Capacity Development in ICT Policy and Internet Governance for Africa-Caribbean-Pacific is training key beneficiaries and institutions who are dealing with Internet Governance and ICT policy issues at the national, regional and global levels. Over 300 ACP officials and other specialists will participate in capacity development programmes between 2009 to 2011 aiming to create a community of IG and ICT policy makers throughout all ACP countries, working together to develop good practice in ICT policy regulations and promote greater stakeholder awareness of IG and ICT issues.

I would like to conclude my statement by commending the UN System as a whole, including DESA and its Division for Public Administration and Development Management, particularly in supporting e-government development efforts of Member States, as well as the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General/Chief Information Technology Officer, for the valid and important contribution they are making, not only to mainstream and integrate communication for development across the UN System, but also in assisting developing countries to improve their capacities to have access to information and communication technologies and therefore be part of the world connectivity.

Thank you.